

Meeting of the Board of Selectmen held on November 28, 2017 beginning at 6:00 pm in the Board of Selectmen's Conference Room, Ludlow Town Hall

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Members present: William Rooney, Chairman; Manuel Silva; Derek DeBarge; Brian Mannix; Carmina Fernandes arrived at 7:00 pm.

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First Order of Business: Pledge of Allegiance

Visitations

Moved by Mr. Silva, seconded by Mr. DeBarge, to open the Tax Classification Hearing at 6:01 pm. Vote 4-0 all in favor.

Present for this hearing was Joe Alves, Assistant Assessor; Board of Assessors members Beverly Barry, Chairman and Tony Rosa; and Paul Kapinos from Paul S. Kapinos Associates..

Mr. Rooney: Good evening, thank you for coming.

Ms. Barry: Beverly Barry, Chairman of the Board of Assessors and we are here tonight in order to set Classification, taxes for the Town. In front of you, you should have an executive summary which I am going to go through right now. Fiscal year 2018 is a recertification year and the work is completed and it has been approved by the Department of Revenue. This was done on November 9, 2017. The fiscal year 2018 values are as of January 1, 2017 or based on sales between January 1, 2015 and December 31, 2016. Our current assessment level is approximately 95% and the Department of Revenue allows assessment levels between 90 and 110% so we're right in the middle there. Values increased as a result of the revaluation by approximately 1-3% and the total evaluation of the town increased by 2.1%. The new growth increased by 46.7% from 421,000,022 last year to 617,457 for fiscal 2018. This increase is attributable to more new construction and land splits/subdivisions in 2016 than in 2015 and the addition of the solar facility over on Center Street. The minimum residential factor is 87.25 which is almost the same as it was last year. The tax levy has increased by 4.7% from \$36,846,047.42 to \$38,585,108.38, this is a \$1,739,060.96 below the maximum allowable levy of 39,000,911. The tax rate at 100% will be \$19.01 compared to last years of \$18.53, this is a 48 cent increase over last year which is 2.6%. Under the current classification rate of 100% the average single family tax bill will increase by \$143 or 3.5% from \$4,067 last year to \$4,211 this year. The average commercial tax bill will increase by \$342 which is 3.8% from \$9,080 last year to \$9,421. This has increased due to more spending for the fiscal year of 2018. Any attempt to shift more of the tax burden from the residential to the commercial, industrial and personal classes would result in significant increases to the CIP taxes since these taxes comprise only 20%.3 of the total value of the town. The impact of a further shift is illustrated in tables 2 and 3 on page 2. Due to the disproportionate increases created by imposing a split rate the Assessors strongly recommend keeping the classification rate at 100%. And on page 2 you'll see the breakdown of the numbers, I won't go through all of them but you can see at the top, it says residential and open space and the value for 2018 versus the value for 2017 and it goes down so forth. The important thing here to note is the average single family tax bill, if the average single family home is valued at \$221,500 it will go from \$4,067 from last year to \$4,211 this year, which is about \$143. The commercial is valued, an average commercial is valued at \$495,600, where last year it was valued at 490, the tax rate difference is \$342 with the new tax rate. If you go down further to table 2, it shows you a rate shift, if you shift the rate 1% on the residential side, you're gonna bring down the residential side to \$18.77 but you're going to increase the commercial, industrial, and personal property tax to \$19.96 which is a 5% increase and you can tell by the chart if you go down so forth what the shift would be. Table 3 shows you the shift in dollars and what the dollars would mean if you shifted it. So we, the Assessors, recommend that we keep a 100% rate.

Mr. Rooney: Okay, anything else from your side at this point?

Ms. Barry: Well I just want to make a note that we all live here in town, we all don't like to see our taxes go up but we as Assessors do not increase the taxes just because we want to increase the taxes, it is all based on what the budget is and what is spent at Town Meeting. So things need to be, I think things need to be looked at a little bit more strictly and try to bring things in line, we have a lot of people on fixed incomes in town that, every year the taxes are going up, we

as Assessors can't do anything about it. And I know a lot of them, your hands are tied too, but it's Town Meeting that things are voted on and we need to, we just need to look at it a little bit more than we do.

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Mr. Rooney: Okay. Anything else from this side, for now? There might be others.

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Mr. Silva: Residential exemption?

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Mr. Alves: Well we're gonna need three motions from you today.

Mr. Rooney: Right. Did you want to talk about the residential

Mr. Silva: No, no, I just thought they'd, I thought they'd explain it right

Mr. Rooney: that's gonna be one of the votes. Actually what I would be looking to do is when we get to the point of taking the three votes, probably just give a summary of the three prior to any motions being made. Questions/comments from Board members?

Mr. DeBarge: Okay, I'll go Mr. Chairman. I saw that the, the, the tax rate and I can't say that I'm not, you know, I don't have any great emotion about it other than, you know, I wish, I wish a lot of things, I wish like people that I've spoken to on the phone, that as you said, nobody likes to see their tax rate go up and at the same time everybody likes their services the way that they are and sometimes you can't have both, sometimes, you know, as one person put it, they don't like to see layoffs but what happens if it comes down to it, when I was telling this person that we have to start saving money rather than taking money out of one fund to keep knocking down the tax rate because as things go sometimes, sometimes taxes have to go up. I myself am on a fixed income as I am retired so I watch the tax rate like I have never done before and I'll be the first to admit it, I have never watched it before and I'll go further, I've never cared about it before, I just paid it, this is the first time in my life that I'm actually watching it, at the same time that I'm watching my trash get picked up on the tree belt, at the same time that I still have the option of going to a transfer station and all the other things that we have the option of doing in this great town that we live in. So, and while I was here I was trying to get the numbers of a couple other towns and I'm sorry to say it's my fault I didn't get them fast enough. My point is, like we have said in other meetings, you can't have all the services that we have and then beef up our savings and have all the jobs that we have and then have a tax rate like 19.01%, I don't think all that can continue, sadly, I don't think that can continue. So our jobs as a whole I think it would be to, would, or our jobs as a whole, let me rephrase that, our jobs as a whole is to try to find ways to make all of this work and try to help people understand that taxes are gonna have to go up sometimes and we got to try to make that better or try to find a way to make everything work without, I think the worst thing that can happen is telling somebody they don't have a job anymore, rather than seeing our tax go up a little bit, that's what I think would be worse. I know a lot would disagree with that depending on, you know, how high our taxes go up. I guess if I had a question out there for any of you, it would be are they any avenues that you guys have talked about where our taxes could see a little ray of light without, I know we've talked about this, (he indicated Mr. Alves) without taking money from Peter to pay Paul and maybe losing something that isn't gonna hurt so much or is there any other ways. I will start looking deeper into this myself, I don't have the answers yet but I will definitely start looking into this, but do you guys have other ways?

Mr. Alves: I think it comes down to tough decisions, you know, by the Select Board and by town meeting floor, that's where it begins and that's where it ends, you know, but sometimes the tough decisions affect people and it affects decision making so until we wrap ourselves around that tough decision making it's tough to stop.

Mr. DeBarge: Yeah and it might be just that simple.

Mr. Rosa: Just more specifically, maybe cutting back on some services, the Town can only, I mean, so we're all clear on what we're talking about.

Mr. Alves: Yeah it's always about spending, you know, and saving, those are the two factors so they come with tough decisions attached to them that, you know, we might have to step up and make sooner rather than later I think.

Ms. Barry: And the more the town grows the more income obviously we have coming in from commercial, from industrial, from personal property, as well as residential so the more development there is in town the more growth the town, the more value the town has which will bring down the taxes.

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Mr. DeBarge: Right, and Mr. Chairman if I may, just one more thing, and I'm not and I know it's very simple as saying no we're not gonna spend money on that and no we're not gonna, you know, do this or no we're not gonna do that, believe me I do understand that, I'm just a believer, and there's other ways to move around certain things and take for example, we were not going to by any means, and I don't want to speak for other members on the Board, I know for my vote, as my vote goes I was not going to give in and vote yes for that 60,000 square foot building to be a cultivation and processing plant for marijuana, there's no way that was gonna happen no matter how much money that was gonna be, so because I knew in my heart of hearts and from what I understood with what we had going on on State Street, that was gonna bring in money in some way, shape or form with Westmass and look what's going on with it now, we are bringing in commerce and it is building more so I just hope that that brings in more and more. All I'm trying to say is yes we can say no, we can be stronger at and stronger at what we do, so to speak, I'm just looking for that way that we can, you guys maybe know of ways or that we can put our heads together and find just different ways of making things work, that's what I'm saying. And that's all I have for this now.

Mr. Rooney: Okay, thank you.

Mr. Mannix: Mr. Chairman, if I might, since I've sat here for the last four or five years, I've always taken the other side of it, I'll continue doing it, I believe we should split the tax rate, I think the taxpayers of the Town of Ludlow deserve it. I look at this, we're talking about a 48 cents increase and the average home, it's just, whatever it was coming out to be for

Mr. Rosa: \$221,000

Mr. Mannix: yeah, for an increase, we're a year or two away from people wanting to put up a school or people wanting to put up a senior center and everything else and if the tax rate continues going like it is, in two years the average tax is gonna up instead of a few dollars, it's gonna go up \$250, \$300, 350 maybe \$400 in one year and it doesn't seem like anybody cares about that for the average taxpayer, I've sat here for the last four or five years, I've heard every elected official in this town, I don't care what Board it is, we're here for the homeowner, we're here for the senior citizen, well quoted by Mr. Petrolati, our State Representative, I mean, very recently, by 2020 40% of the Town of Ludlow is gonna be senior citizens, so I think it's time we as all Boards in this town, everybody has a position in town, maybe for once we're looking out for senior citizens, well let's look out for them, if 40% of the town is senior citizens, we're worried about a split tax rate because it's not gonna look good for the small business man, well what is that \$400 increase in two years gonna look like for the senior citizen, that's \$400 a year for the next thirty years that person's gonna have to pay, they'll be dead and gone but somebody will still be paying it. What are we doing about that, we're spending our money faster than we're bringing it in. I've always said that. I've always got the backlash from everybody in this room, we can't have the split tax rate for a whole lot of different reasons. Northampton City Council just voted the other day, nine to two with the Mayor saying I'm gonna veto it, for the split tax rate. They found there was a flaw because it wasn't posted correctly, they're gonna vote on it again this week, okay. City of Chicopee, we never really hear anything about how bad they have it tax-wise, they've had the split tax rate, Agawam's had it forever, we never hear how tough it is in Agawam, you do hear some cities and towns are screaming tax dollars all the time, cutting services and cutting people and everything else, these people have that tax rate and they're doing very very well. Why they doing very very well, maybe it's the leadership, maybe it's the common sense, maybe all of a sudden instead of spending money before we get it, we're, Mr. DeBarge was talking about taking money out of stabilization fund, maybe we shouldn't be spending any money before we have it. And I'm not talking just this Board here, I'm talking about every Board in town, we control very little in this town, we're called the Town Fathers, how much of the budget do we really have control over, okay, take away salaries, we got control over very little, okay, you take the DPW and the School Department, they have a lot more, it's everybody in this town, but yet you people come in here, no let's keep it the same, you know, this is the only way to do it, it's gonna hurt somebody, everything hurts somebody, 40% of this town is going to be senior citizens, who is speaking for them? In all your meetings and

everybody you discuss anything with, did anybody bring up 40% of these people are senior citizens, maybe we should think about them first? No, well this is the way we've always done it, this is the way it should be, this is the best way, well I sit here once again I'm gonna disagree that it's not. We need new ideas, we need new revenue, we need new direction and the only way we're gonna get it and the only way we're gonna change things to make things better, the only way maybe we can get our money before we spend it, is by making change and at this table today is the first place and the first opportunity at this moment that we can make a change. And I'll sit here and say to everybody in this room, yes we need to make a change, we cannot continue on, we fought over this last year and oh you know every once in a while your taxes have to go up, well last year it was, I made the comment about when's it gonna go down, well, you know, it's, it's, you know, this year is a bad year and whatever the number was last year, we'll just say 32 cents I forget exactly what it was, okay let's say it's 32 cents, oh but this is really a bad year, oh holy cripe, our really bad year went from 32 cents to 43 cents, alright, unless we change, we make movement and when I say we, I mean everybody that works for this town, any elected official in this town, any Board in this town, it's not a one person thing, okay. Easthampton went to a Mayor form of government, okay, off the top of my head I think Easthampton's tax rate is \$17.00. Now I don't know what their services are, I'm not gonna break down everybody's services, everybody has some and don't have others, Ludlow is one of the better ones, no question, but there is a lot more ways of doing things than to threaten people, oh we're gonna cut services, the School Department you want to cut their budget, okay that's it Athletics are out, you want to cut the Fire Department, that's it the Ambulance isn't running, your parents are gonna die when they want an ambulance, we throw all these things out at people, the worst things scenario. No, we need to sit down, stop, look, listen, we need to change, it's the only way we're not gonna take money out of that stabilization fund every year, it's the only way we're gonna put money in there and stabilize this town to be in better shape, but yet it'll be a, only 3-1 vote tonight against what I'm saying, there's only four members here and the same thing I'm gonna project is gonna happen with the School and it'll probably happen with the senior center and all those things are just gonna continue on and I'm sitting here saying tonight to everybody here, all the elected officials in town, all the town citizens, it has to slow down. I want it to stop, it's not gonna stop overnight, I understand that, we need to slow it down and I'm sitting here tonight saying this is the place to slow it down. That's all Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Rooney: Okay. Mr. Silva, anything at this point?

Mr. Silva: Not in relevance to classification, more values type deal, so this is not the place for it because we're here for classification so I will reserve that. The question I have is more for probably Ellie and Kim, at our last sub-budget whatever meeting we had, did we not decide that we were gonna go to the 7.4 in the local receipts? As a matter of fact, we were over the local receipts and I was kind of nervous about that, and now that this is in, it's a 7 million 212, 200,000 less.

Ms. Collins: Right, so after talking to the Assessor, I had to reduce PILOT and in talking to Dolly at the school I had to reduce Medicare reimbursement based on what they know is coming in so that's why it went down.

Mr. Silva: I'm good there. One more, Joe you're signing for, you're signing this thing for Selectmen, shouldn't be.

Mr. Alves: I do what Department of Revenue tells me, I just need your signatures, not your mouse click.

Mr. Silva: Yeah but you need authority to sign that.

Mr. Alves: Given to me by DOR Manny.

Mr. Silva: No. I just went over this with Jim Podolak. You can't sign for us without us signing first or giving you authority to sign. Actually, Ellie should be signing it.

Mr. Alves: She doesn't have parameters to go in there and click.

Mr. Silva: You don't?

Ms. Villano: Nope. I do not.

Mr. Silva: The other thing is eventually we're all gonna have to go in and sign by the way, we're all gonna have to go under Gateway and punch our little signature. They're not gonna allow the hand signatures anymore. Probably a year or two. That

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Mr. Rooney: Okay. I do have some questions on the information contained in the executive summary. So where we, the paragraph that talks about the new growth, maybe it's just a terminology thing, when you say land splits/subdivisions, I guess I'm not sure what we mean by a land split.

Mr. Alves: It's a new lot that's created, a new building lot, a subdivision comes in, splits land, it creates a bunch of lots with value. So that's, this year most of our growth was from new subdivision lots.

Mr. Rooney: Okay and I get, that kind of follows up with, do you, with the 46.7% increase in new growth, you say based on the land splits/subdivisions and the addition of the solar facility on Center Street, do you know what, what's the split there, of the 46.7, in other words, how much of it is the subdivisions, how much of it is the solar?

Mr. Alves: The solar is about 5 million worth of value, I think our growth was near 33 million so it

Mr. Rooney: so the remainder being

Mr. Alves: residential.

Mr. Rooney: Okay. So again, let's just leave out the solar facility for a minute, so you're, I mean I guess, you're not saying it, the numbers are saying it, but there's been that much

Mr. Alves: It's been a really good year, at least a year and a half in town where construction, especially new construction, picked up a lot. A lot of new condo's, new homes, you know, that's been the main driver this year. The years before mainly was commercial, that's flip flopped this year to mainly residential for the growth.

Mr. Rooney: I see. The other question I had is in the second to last paragraph there, talking about the split and the burden, etc., when you say that the commercial, industrial property taxes comprise only 20.3% of the total value, do we know what that number was last year or the year before, in other words is that a number that's stagnant, is it a number that's growing, is it a number that's decreasing?

Mr. Alves: It stays pretty level, you know, I mean it might move up a little bit, but usually it

Mr. Kapinos: Last year was 20.2.

Mr. Alves: Last year was 20.2, so this year it's 20.3

Mr. Rooney: I guess that's pretty stagnant.

Mr. Alves: that's pretty stagnant, you know, we're a residential community, there's no doubt, we do have some great commercial entities, but residential moves this town.

Mr. Rooney: And I'm sorry, did you see it on here, is that something I just missed?

Mr. Kapinos: No I looked at last years.

Mr. Rooney: Okay, alright, thank you. I guess the other thing that I would just make a couple comments because it seems like some of us are making comments so why not, got to jump on the band wagon. And I know I've said this a number of times over the now ten years that I've been on this Board, you know, what we and by we, I don't necessarily just limit it to the Board of Selectmen, really the Town, the Town government, it seems to me what we do is, we have to strike a balance, we have to strike a balance between the services we want to offer and to do that

hopefully at an affordable rate. Now the affordable rate part of that is rather subjective, what I might find affordable somebody else may not and vice versa and that's always a struggle, but I do think it makes sense to, let's look at the bigger picture. And by that I mean I think is was at our last meeting or the meeting before, one of the things that was in our packet, and Ellie you might be able to help me out here, there was a booklet and I think it was from MMA, do you recall, and it was

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Ms. Villano: Beacon?

Mr. Rooney: It wasn't Beacon, no, it was a, well what it was is, it was a document that listed every community in the state, what their tax rate was, what their tax average tax bill was

Mr. Silva: I gave you that.

Mr. Rooney: you gave me that, okay, thank you, and I meant to bring it in tonight but of course it's sitting on my desk at my office

Mr. Mannix: She sent one out today

Mr. Rooney: No, that's a little bit different, it's not as quite as comprehensive but, so all I did was to take, for the most part, all western Mass communities and I say western Mass I mean I didn't include every Berkshire community or whatever, but there were about twenty-five or so that I just listed on a sheet of paper, at some point I will do it in, maybe that you can see it in your tablet because I think it's interesting and what I did is I took a look at what is the average tax bill and I think it was for fiscal year 18, it might have been 17, but I'm not certain of that, for all of those different communities and where does Ludlow rank, and Ludlow ranks smack dab in the middle. And to a certain degree that wasn't a great surprise because I did the same thing back a number of years ago some of you may recall, on a, I think it was a very cold February night, there was a meeting at the Lusitano Club, put on by residents because there was a, I think it was Mr. Saunders term, there was a perfect storm of things that went into a rather large increase in our taxes and there were citizens that were concerned, as they should be, and there was a big meeting at the Lusitano Club and prior to that I know the Town Administrator had provided me some information from the Department of Revenue and I really did kind of the same thing, I just listed for the most part, all of our western Mass communities and again back then, and I don't what that was, five or six years ago I guess, maybe more, we were smack dab in the middle. And so, that doesn't help us pay the bill, it doesn't help, as Mr. Mannix said, the seniors or not the seniors, just the residents out there, pay the bill but I think it's important to put it in perspective that we are in a community that has a tax burden, tax bill, that is in the middle of our neighbors, and then we look at what are our services and, you know, certainly the folks in East Longmeadow may think they have great services and we think we have great services but certainly I would look at the services that we provide, whether it's schools, police, fire, trash pickup, etc., you know, Board of Health, we're only one of two communities in Massachusetts that offers public nurses. Now for some of those, of us who don't use it, do we really need it, well we do if we need it, either for ourselves or for our parents, so the point is we have to strike a balance between the services we offer and to do it at an affordable rate. Can we do better? Absolutely and I don't mean to suggest that we shouldn't. I go Joe, to your term, you used the term, we've got to make tough decisions, well that's true, but we do that, the Board of Selectmen does it, the School Committee does it, the Board of Public Works, you know, all of those and Town Meeting. Now again, should we be doing a better job, maybe, but it's not as if jeez, now we better start making tough decisions, we make those tough decisions every other Tuesday night, Town Meeting does it every time that it meets. Again, some people may quarrel with the process, some people may quarrel with the outcome, but they make tough decisions. Having said that, and here I would agree with the, I think the message from Mr. Mannix, we are entering a very unique period of time in the next, let's call it the next two years, and by that I mean, as everybody knows, on the horizon the voters of Ludlow may, I won't say will, but may vote one way or the other on a new senior center, may vote one way or the other on a combined elementary school, a new building. That is going to have a tremendous burden on, not just seniors, but on all of our taxpayers. And so my only cautionary tone there is we need to be ready because we are entering a very unique position financially and we are going to have to do things that we're probably not wanting to do, probably not have had to do in the past, but given what may be out there for financial obligations with perhaps one or two rather expensive infrastructure projects, we're going to have to do that so I don't think that that's a surprise to people, certainly

in this room, at this table, on your side, but I think more for the residents of the town, we're gonna have to make some tough decisions, even tougher decisions that we've already made. So I guess that's my soapbox for tonight. At least for now. Others?

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Mr. Silva: You mentioned the solar on Center Street, is that a PILOT?

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Mr. Alves: No, we did not strike a PILOT yet.

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Mr. Silva: So you valued it?

Mr. Alves: DOR allowed us to tax them while we negotiate.

Ms. Berry: It may go to Town Meeting, a PILOT, we have to go to Town Meeting.

Mr. Silva: No.

Mr. Alves: For solar PILOT, we have to go to Town Meeting

Mr. Silva: No.

Mr. Alves: for permission to enter into it. Again, this is DOR guideline.

Mr. Silva: Right here, this Board is the only one that can do a PILOT, we decide on that. But valuing is dangerous, valuing it then it has to come off, we're gonna lose a lot of value. So just wondering why that happened that way and I mentioned this before on another one that now is back on the rolls and I suggested no, you should not take it out and you put it back

Mr. Alves: And I understand, you know, you got DOR flip flopping back and forth on yearly basis with solar.

Mr. Rooney: Hold on, hold on, let one person finish and then you can respond.

Mr. Silva: They don't flip flop Joe, you tell them what's gonna happen, what you're doing, you tell them, they really don't tell you what to do. You're telling me they allowed you to tax it, they're exempt, period, if they take it to ATB, they're exempt, if they don't want to do a PILOT, you got to exempt them. As the way it stands right now legislatively. So taxing them I think is a dangerous thing to do, you said five million dollars?

Mr. Alves: Yeah, more or less.

Mr. Silva: That's a lot of money that will have to come off the tax rolls and that's fake growth. Anyway, I'm just saying.

Mr. Alves: I think it'd be, you know, a bigger mistake not to tax them and just to leave that in there, we tried to strike a deal with them, they were slow on with information, slow with meetings, they didn't get there anyhow. But we explained this to DOR, this was our certification year and they had no quorums about it, you know, they allowed us to do it. I think going forward, the PILOT should mirror the value that's being captured at the moment so that's something we'll, you know, we'll try to keep an eye going forward, so hopefully by May we can, you know, get the Board of Selectmen to come on board, vote for a PILOT so we can strike a deal. That's what was left on the table with DOR. Now again with the dump, solar was the same, the DOR rep told us the first year, it's up to you guys if you want to tax them or not, we chose not to, next year another rep told us you need to tax them as you told me and sure enough we had to tax them this year, or was it last year, I think it was last year so. You know, this is a solar game that they play, you know.

Mr. Silva: Again, that's understood, solar is exempt, all solar is exempt at this point in legislation, that's all I'm saying. So by you taxing them, I think it's wrong, but maybe it will work out, I'm just saying it could be, down the road it could an issue,

Mr. Alves: You're right, it could end up at ATB.

Mr. Silva: because they do not have to pay taxes, they are exempt unless they come in to the table with a PILOT program and usually that's done before they do the facility because they need their financials and they need to get their recs and all that stuff all squared away, I think you're behind the eight ball already, but okay, I'm done.

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Mr. Alves: No I think he's right on the point but, you know, Borrego didn't approach us until September I want to say, you know, by that time we were in the middle of re-certification so it was tough to get anything done with them. I think we are on the road to striking a deal and hopefully we can have something for you guys by May for sure.

Mr. Rosa: I think tactilely they might have waited or delayed on purpose knowing that and I mean, as the Assessor, Joe can't force them to come to the table with the PILOT,

Mr. Silva: No.

Mr. Rosa: so you know, we're kind of, what do you do?

Mr. Silva: You don't tax them, they're exempt.

Mr. Rooney: Okay. Any other questions, comments from Board members? Okay, it is a hearing so it's open to the public, public? Alright, so we are now at the point where you are looking for us to make three votes, right?

Mr. ??: Right

Mr. Rooney: one being the single or split tax rate, the other being residential exemption and the other being a small commercial exemption, could you, somebody just give us a quick overview, I don't know that you need to give us an overview on the single or split tax, I think we got that.

Mr. Alves: This goes down to a shift game just like the split rate, you're shifting burden from one class to another, small residential exemption operates the same manner where you can shift values from one class to another, the exemption can't exceed 20% on average of a value, residential property. The Assessors first determine the average assessed value residential parcels, they adopt a percentage and is applied to it. So you would take 20% off the residential exemption, I believe it's the first hundred thousand and that gets shifted towards the rest of the class.

Mr. Rooney: Okay, does the Board of Assessors, you made clear your recommendation on the single or split tax rate, do you have recommendations on the residential exemption and the small commercial exemption?

Mr. Alves: I think, you know, they stand where not to adopt the residential exemption.

Mr. Rooney: and what about the small commercial?

Mr. Alves: It's the same line, you know, playing the shift game is unfair so this does the same, you'd have to identify, you know, a small percentage of the small commercial that would qualify for this and again shift that burden to the rest of the class.

Mr. Rooney: Just so I'm clear, so if this Board were to adopt what you're recommending, we already know on, I think we already know on the split tax rate or single rate, I think we know where you are on that, but on the residential it would be that this Board would vote not to adopt the residential exemption, correct?

Mr. Alves: Correct.

Mr. Rooney: And that this Board vote not to adopt the small commercial exemption?

Mr. Alves: Correct.

Mr. Rooney: And just so I'm clear, I know we've done this before, you want three separate votes?

Ms. Barry: Yes.

Mr. Rooney: Okay, why don't we take them one at a time, one being the tax rate. I'll entertain a motion.

Mr. Silva: Move that adopt the residential factor of one for all classes of property

Mr. Rooney: I'm sorry, for, what was the last part of what you said?

Mr. Silva: all classes of property.

Mr. Alves: The first motion.

Mr. Rooney: Oh yeah, okay, alright, for all classes, I thought you said something else. Do we have a second on that?

Mr. DeBarge: I need you to reword that, I'm sorry say it again.

Mr. Silva: I move that we adopt the residential factor of one for all classes of property.

Mr. DeBarge: Second.

Mr. Rooney: Any discussion?

Mr. Mannix: This is a comment, I believe it's wrong, I believe the taxpayers of the Town of Ludlow deserve better than that, I think a split rate works very well in other places and I think it's a way to start making a change and move forward.

Mr. Silva: Mr. Chairman?

Mr. Rooney: Mr. Silva?

Mr. Silva: Yeah I'm leaning towards Mr. Mannix but however, I think 20% is a little light, if we ever do get up to 25% then I would certainly entertain that, the impact wouldn't be so great, but 20%, it's almost there but at this point, no.

Mr. DeBarge: Mr. Chairman?

Mr. Rooney: Mr. DeBarge?

Mr. DeBarge: I'm actually in the same boat as Mr. Silva here, I've been going over the percentages myself and also with the business coming in, I'm almost there myself but I would like to see 25% myself.

Mr. Rooney: Any further discussion? Hearing none, all in favor?

Mr. DeBarge: Aye

Mr. Silva: Aye,

Mr. Rooney: Aye; opposed?

Mr. Mannix: Opposed

Vote 3-1 in favor.

Mr. Silva: I move that we take no action on the residential exemption as well as the small commercial exemption.

Mr. Mannix: Second.

Mr. Rooney: Just for discussion, is there any need to, given how the motion was made combining, is there any problem with it?

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Mr. Rosa: I don't think it matters.

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Mr. Alves: No.

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Ms. Barry: No.

Mr. Rooney: Okay, so we have a motion and a second, any discussion? Hearing none, all in favor?

Mr. DeBarge: Aye

Mr. Silva: Aye

Mr. Mannix: Aye

Mr. Rooney: Aye

Vote 4-0 all in favor.

Mr. Rooney: Okay, thank you. Motion to close the hearing.

Mr. Silva: Mr. Chairman, I move that we close the classification hearing at 6:44.

Mr. Mannix: Second.

Vote 4-0 all in favor.

The Board met with Chip Harrington to discuss the Toys for Tots Santa's Sleigh Ride.

Keith Ouellette could not be here, he has some business to attend to tonight. The event will be held on December 17th which is the third Sunday starting at 1:00 pm. The route will be the same as it usually is. We finish at the Town Hall right around sunset. The Rotary Club is the lead sponsor again this year. At the Town Hall we try to have carolers, hot chocolate, Dunkin Donuts has always been wonderful about donating every year. The Police Department, Fire Department and the DPW have been contacted are willing to provide whatever help is needed. The Marine Corp will be here to receive the toys collected; it's unwrapped new toys. All the toys collected stay here in the area. Santa and Mrs. Claus will be here, as always.

Moved by Mr. Silva, seconded by Mr. DeBarge, that we allow the event Toys for Tots Santa's Sleigh Ride throughout the town. Vote 4-0 all in favor.

Correspondence

295. Chief Madera, Police Department – request to charge off medical bills and lost wages to Chapter 41, Section 111F for injuries sustained by a Police Officer on November 5, 2017.

Moved by Mr. Mannix, seconded by Mr. DeBarge, that we charge off all medical bills and lost wages to Chapter 41, Section 111F for injuries sustained by a Police Officer on November 5, 2017 as submitted by Chief Madera. Vote 4-0 all in favor.

296. Chief Madera, Police Department – request to charge off medical bills and lost wages to Chapter 41, Section 111F for injuries sustained by a Police Officer on November 5, 2017.

Moved by Mr. Mannix, seconded by Mr. DeBarge, that we charge off medical bills and lost wages under Chapter 41, Section 111F for injuries sustained by a Police Officer on November 5, 2017 as submitted by Chief Madera. Vote 4-0 all in favor.

297. Marshall Moriarty, Moriarty Law Firm, Inc. – requesting that the Town and Ludlow Firefighters Association Local 1840 commence negotiations.

Moved by Mr. Mannix, seconded by Mr. Silva, that we open negotiations with the Ludlow Firefighters Association Local 1840 as submitted by Attorney Marshall Moriarty. Vote 4-0 all in favor.

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298. MMWEC Public Energy Partners - Joint Action Newsletter Fall 2017.

Moved by Mr. Silva, seconded by Mr. Mannix, to file. Vote 4-0 all in favor.

299. Anna Lucey, Director Government Affairs, Charter Communications - informing the Board of a change to the channel lineup.

Moved by Mr. Mannix, seconded by Mr. Silva, to file. Vote 4-0 all in favor.

300. Chad Mullin, Chairman School Committee – requesting to place an article on the warrant for the January Special Town Meeting for appropriation of funding for the Chapin Street Core Building Project.

301. Chad Mullin, Chairman School Committee – requesting to place a question on the March ballot allowing for the cost of a new school to be funded through debt exclusion.

Moved by Mr. Silva, seconded by Mr. DeBarge, that we grant the requests by the Chairman of the School Committee for the Chapin Street Core Building project as well as the debt exclusion and question on the March election ballot.

Mr. Rooney, Mr. Mannix and Mr. DeBarge stated that they feel the School Committee should present their plans to the Board before granting the requests. Mr. Rooney stated that when the Senior Center Building Committee sent the same requests in, the Board requested that they present their plans at a Board of Selectmen meeting. Mr. Silva stated that this is the process that the School Committee has to go through but he is willing to withdraw the motion.

Mr. Silva withdrew his previous motion and moved to table items 300 and 301 until a future meeting with the School Committee. Mr. Mannix seconded the new motion. Vote 4-0 all in favor.

Visitations (Continued)

The Board met with Neil Paquette, Chairman and Cheryl Messer, Director of Nurses of the Board of Health to discuss Classification Plan changes for the Public Nurses.

Ms. Messer stated that they have a lot of vacancies. Currently they have four part-time nurses, one full-time nurse and one full-time Director. There is a vacant part-time position of 30 hours with benefits and one vacant part-time position of 15 hours without benefits. We would like to take hours from the 15 hour position and add it to the 30 hour position to create a full-time position of 37½ hours with benefits. So the change would be 2 part-time and 2 full-time nurse positions. She stated that there are patients that are not receiving the services that they should and they have had to turn people away due to the shortage of staff. It is becoming a big problem and is getting very stressful on the nurses.

Mr. Rooney stated just so he is certain, the number of people currently that receive health insurance will not increase with this reconfiguration, is that right? Ms. Messer stated yes sir, it will be just the same. He asked if HR has been involved in this. Ms. Villano stated yes, she sees no issue with this. She stated that there is no increase to benefits or hours, it's just a realignment to the Classification Plan. It may be a decrease to the hours.

Mr. Silva made a motion, seconded by Mr. DeBarge, to grant the request from the Board of Health for classification plan changes as discussed. Vote 4-0 in favor with Mrs. Fernandes abstaining.

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Correspondence (Continued)

302. Removed

303. Chief Ryan Pease, Ludlow Fire Department – letter informing the Board of additional donations made to the Ambulance Grants and Gifts Account from Roger & Elaine Bernier - \$10.00; Louis & Phyllis Casagrande - \$60.00; Allan Clowes - \$10.00; Basil Crandell & Jo Crandell Condon - \$60.00; Dianne Douches in memory of John & Christine Douches - \$40.00; Maureen Downing - \$40.00; Robert Duval - \$40.00; Mary Gagliardi - \$60.00; Alfred Halama - \$10.00; Richard & Shirley Staples - \$10.00; and Anthony Torres - \$25.00. Board to accept the donations as a gift to the Town.

Moved by Mr. Mannix, seconded by Mrs. Fernandes, that the Board accept the donations given to the Town through the Fire Department on the ambulance fund. Vote 5-0 all in favor.

304. Ludlow Cultural Council – requesting permission to use the River Walk on April 7th at 10:00 a.m. with a rain date of April 8th as the venue for the Ludlow School students to showcase their art, music and literature in town.

Moved by Mr. Mannix, seconded by Mrs. Fernandes, to give the Ludlow Cultural Council permission to use the River Walk on April 7th at 10:00 a.m. with a rain date of April 8th as the venue for the Ludlow School students to showcase their art, music and literature in town pending approval from the Police and Fire Departments. Vote 5-0 all in favor.

Unfinished Business

Board to discuss the Selectmen's Fee Structure.

Ms. Villano stated that this topic was tabled from a previous meeting and the Board wanted to get the Building Department's fee structure. The Building Department hasn't completed their study of surrounding communities and has not provided their fee structure at this time. She stated the fees to be discussed are all the licenses issued by the Board of Selectmen. She stated that she has been working in the Selectmen's office for 18 years and the fees have not changed for at least that long.

Moved by Mr. Mannix, seconded by Mr. Silva, to table the unfinished business to discuss the Selectmen's fee structure. Vote 5-0 all in favor.

Board to approve and sign the Executive Session minutes of October 17, 2017

Moved by Mr. DeBarge, seconded by Mr. Mannix, to accept the minutes of the Board of Selectmen held on Tuesday, October 17 with all persons present. Vote 5-0 all in favor.

Board to approve and sign the Selectmen meeting minutes of June 20, 2017

Moved by Mr. Mannix, seconded by Mrs. Fernandes, that we approve and sign the Selectmen's minutes of June 20, 2017 with all members present with the exception of Mr. Silva and Mr. DeBarge. Vote 3-0 in favor with Mr. Silva and Mr. DeBarge abstaining.

Board to approve and sign the Selectmen meeting minutes of March 21, 2017

Moved by Mr. DeBarge, seconded by Mr. Mannix, to accept the minutes of the Board of Selectmen held on March 21 with all members present. Vote 5-0 all in favor.

Board to approve and sign the Selectmen meeting minutes of May 2, 2017

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Moved by Mr. DeBarge, seconded by Mr. Mannix, to accept the minutes of the Board of Selectmen held on Tuesday, May 2, with all members present. Vote 5-0 all in favor.

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Board to approve and sign the Selectmen meeting minutes of July 11, 2017

Moved by Mr. DeBarge, seconded by Mr. Mannix, that we accept the minutes of the Board of Selectmen held on Tuesday, July 11 with all members present. Vote 5-0 all in favor.

Board to approve and sign the Selectmen meeting minutes of August 8, 2017

Moved by Mr. Silva, seconded by Mrs. Fernandes, that we approve and accept the minutes of August 8, 2017 with all members present except Mr. Mannix and Mr. DeBarge. Vote 3-0 in favor with Mr. Mannix and Mr. DeBarge abstaining.

Board to approve and sign the Selectmen meeting minutes of September 5, 2017

Moved by Mr. DeBarge, seconded by Mr. Silva, that we accept the minutes of the Board of Selectmen meeting held on Tuesday, September 5, 2017 with all members present. Vote 5-0 all in favor.

Board to approve and sign the Selectmen meeting minutes of September 19, 2017

Moved by Mr. DeBarge, seconded by Mr. Mannix, accept and approve the minutes of the Board of Selectmen's meeting held on September 19, 2017 with all members present. Vote 5-0 all in favor.

New Business

Board to approve and sign the contract between the Town of Ludlow and HB Communications for LCTV.

Moved by Mr. Silva, seconded by Mr. DeBarge, that we approve and sign the contract between the Town of Ludlow and HB Communications for LCTV. Vote 5-0 all in favor.

Board to discuss the required ascertainment public hearing for cable television negotiations to receive public input.

Ms. Villano stated that as part of the negotiations, there is a needs assessment that needs to be done and an ascertainment hearing. This is a public hearing that can be done by the Board of Selectmen at one of your meetings, it can be tasked to the Cable Committee to do a public hearing or it can be done separate from a Board of Selectmen's meeting. It will be one of two public hearings that need to be done. It's an opportunity for the public to give their input about the cable programming in Ludlow.

Moved by Mr. Mannix, seconded by Mr. Silva, to task the hearing to the Cable Committee since they are the ones doing the negotiations. Vote 4-0 in favor with Mrs. Fernandes abstaining.

Mr. Silva stated that the LA-5 is the tax classification form that is required by the Department of Revenue, it's the vote taken by the Board tonight and the biggest part of it is the notification of what's in the excess levy.

Moved by Mr. Silva, seconded by Mr. DeBarge, that we sign the Tax Classification LA-5. Vote 3-1 in favor with Mrs. Fernandes abstaining.

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The Board perused the Executive Session minutes of November 14, 2017.

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The Board perused the Selectmen meeting minutes of November 17, 2017.

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The Board perused the Selectmen meeting minutes of November 6, 2017.

Visitations (Continued)

The Board held a Verizon Pole Location Hearing for Miller Street, Pole #T.16½/E.143/75M.

Mrs. Fernandes made a motion, seconded by Mr. Mannix, to open the hearing for the Miller Street Verizon Pole location at 7:35 pm. Vote 5-0 all in favor.

Mr. Davis: My name is Paul Davis, I work for a company by the name of UC Synergetic out of Sunderland, we're an Engineering contract company doing work for Verizon and I am here representing Verizon on their behalf.

Mr. Rooney: If you could just tell us what you're looking for.

Mr. Davis: Sure, this petition pertains again to Miller Street, to place one jointly-owned pole, #T.16½/E143/75M on the westerly side of Miller Street at a point approximately 60 feet southerly from the center line of Maria's Way. This pole basically has two objectives, one is this pole was requested by Eversource and they'd like to upgrade their equipment in this area; also this pole would provide electrical service for Maria's Way, it is a subdivision there, as I'm sure you know, and also this pole would serve as a mid-span pole which basically means it would be a new pole between two existing poles reducing the rather long span that's there now, which is roughly about 200 feet. It would cut it down to about 132 feet which would be more in line with what Eversource would like. So that's basically it.

Mr. Rooney: Alright. Any questions/comments from Board members?

Mrs. Fernandes: When you say jointly owned, you mean Eversource and Verizon would own that pole jointly?

Mr. Davis: Yes.

Mr. Rooney: Any other questions or comments?

Mr. DeBarge: Is this for that whole new street?

Mr. Davis: Yes, the subdivision, Maria's Way.

Mr. DeBarge: It's for that, for the whole thing, okay.

Mr. Rooney: Okay.

Mr. Mannix: Mr. Chairman, if I might, I'll make a motion.

Mr. Rooney: Sure, Mr. Mannix.

Mr. Mannix: I make a motion we approve the petition by Verizon on a pole movement on Miller Street as stated in Verizon's job #1A2CT6L.

Mrs. Fernandes: Second.

Mr. Rooney: Any discussion? Hearing none, all in favor? Vote 5-0 all in favor.

Mr. Davis: Thank you.

Mr. Silva made a motion, seconded by Mr. Mannix, to close the hearing for the Verizon Miller Street pole location at 7:37. Vote 5-0 all in favor.

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Board to discuss the Town's Health Insurance plans offered to Town employees. TOWN OF LUDLOW

Ms. Villano stated that back in May after meeting with MIIA and Blue Cross/Blue Shield the Board asked the Insurance Advisory Committee (IAC) to discuss changing the Town/Employee contribution rates and/or making design changes to the current health insurance plans. MIIA and Blue Cross met with the IAC several times and provided them with design changes to the HMO and the PPO which kind of mirror what the GIC is. Most of the Unions have agreed to change the contribution rates from 81/19 to 75/25; some of the Unions have not agreed at this time. The IAC will review the plans and make suggestions to the Board of Selectmen. The Selectmen can either go with the recommendations of the IAC or take a different path. It would then be up to the Unions to accept the design plan changes and that could go through the regular union negotiations or through Chapter 32B, Sections 21-23 which would call for a public employee committee.

Mr. Rooney stated that the total cost for the Town's share of health benefits for fiscal year 2018 is 10.1 million dollars. If the contribution rates were changed to 75/25 the Town would save \$741,000 per year; the design changes would be a savings of \$660,000 per year for Benchmark 1 and \$900,000 per year for Benchmark 2.

Mr. Mannix stated that he believes that the IAC is moving very slowly and is resistant to make any changes to the health insurance plans. He stated we need to invoke Chapter 32B, Sections 21-23.

Mr. Rooney stated that he believes that as employees there is no great incentive for the members of the IAC to move along quickly but there is for the Town. The Town can't continue to have this process go at a snail's pace. We owe it to the taxpayers of Ludlow to get this moving. The health insurance costs and future increases are unsustainable for the Town. He thinks we need to invoke Chapter 32B, Sections 21-23 and get that process started.

Mr. DeBarge stated we've waited far too long to do this, we've waited far too long for the School to do this, he believes now is the time to act on health insurance changes and invoke Chapter 32B.

Ms. Villano stated that the IAC has sent a letter stating they are willing to look at design changes so if you want to make design changes through the process of 21-23 you just need to make that designation and we will have Town Counsel partner with us for that process.

Mr. Mannix made a motion, seconded by Mr. DeBarge, we vote to start the process under 32B, Sections 21 - 23. Vote 5-0 all in favor.

The Board met with Sergeant Brian Shameklis, Chairman of the Safety Committee and Officer Derek Smolinski.

Sgt. Shameklis stated that it was brought to their attention that there is no flashing School Zone signs heading north on Fuller Street or west on Chapin Street. There is a flashing sign coming south on Fuller and also one coming east on Chapin. The Safety Committee is recommending that a sign showing School Zone, 20 MPH limit and the hours of school be installed. If the new school is approved, they may want to revisit flashing signs in the future. There is SCHOOL painted on the pavement, and there is a couple signs but they are ambiguous as to where the school zone starts and where 20 MPH actually starts. He stated one sign at the corner of Chapin and Fuller should cover both northbound Fuller traffic and westbound Chapin traffic.

Mr. Mannix asked if there are any State regulations on placement of the new sign. Sgt. Shameklis stated he does not know if there is regarding how far from the school it needs to be

placed. He will look into it if the Board would prefer. He also stated that this idea came from Steve Frederick, the DPW Director.

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Moved by Mr. Mannix, seconded by Mrs. Fernandes, that we approve the sign for the intersection of Chapin and Fuller Streets on the northwest corner as proposed by the Safety Committee. Vote 5-0 all in favor.

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Sgt. Shameklis stated that he was approached by Susan Santos, the secretary to the School Superintendent regarding the entrance/exit to the parking lot for 63 Chestnut Street which is located on Winsor Street. Vehicles are parking on Winsor Street right up to that driveway causing a line of sight issue. The Safety Committee is proposing installing a No Parking Sign on either side of the driveway on Winsor Street ten feet from the driveway.

Moved by Mr. Mannix, seconded by Mrs. Fernandes, that we accept putting parking limit signs before and after the driveway at 63 Chestnut Street. Vote 5-0 all in favor.

Sgt. Shameklis stated that they are requesting that a No Parking From Here to Corner sign be placed on Blanchard Street, twenty feet from Fuller Street. The signs will enforce the bylaw which states you can't park within 20 feet of an intersection.

Moved by Mr. Mannix, seconded by Mrs. Fernandes, that we allow the No Parking Here to Corner sign be posted on Blanchard Avenue at the intersection of Fuller Street. Vote 5-0 all in favor.

Mr. DeBarge asked about putting a No Left Turn sign on West Avenue going on to Center Street. With the Howard Street closing, a lot of vehicles are now taking a left onto Center Street. Sgt. Shameklis stated that that was discussed and everyone felt that it shouldn't be addressed at the same time as the closing of Howard Street and also the Board did not vote on that. He stated that Steve Frederick from the DPW is working on an engineering plan to correct that issue in the future.

Mr. Silva stated that he has had numerous complaints about the traffic at the entrance/exit at Veteran's Park School. Officer Smolinski stated there is a crossing guard there during middle school and elementary school hours, but not the high school hours. Sgt. Shameklis stated they can take a look at it.

Closing Comments

Mr. DeBarge stated he hopes everybody had a good Thanksgiving and spent time with their family. He stated that Ludlow beat Palmer in the annual Thanksgiving Football game. His son played his last game as the Quarterback and broke the team record of 20 touchdowns.

Mrs. Fernandes reminded everyone that the ERC5 is holding their Government Holiday Reception on December 5 at the Twin Hills Country Club.

Mr. Mannix stated that his brother moved into Mill 10 on State Street, it is extremely nice and looks good. It's a homerun.

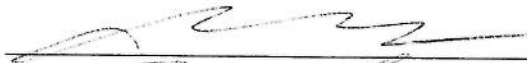
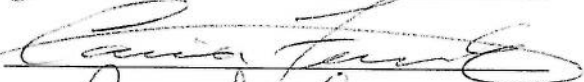



Mr. Rooney: The Board is to enter into executive session for the purposes of non-union contract negotiations with the Town Administrator and I as Chairman declare that this bargaining may have a detrimental effect on the public body if held in open session.

Mr. Mannix made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Fernandes, to enter into executive session for reasons stated by the Chairman at 8:19 pm and not to return to regular session.

Mr. Mannix, yes; Mrs. Fernandes, yes; Mr. Silva, yes; Mr. DeBarge, yes; Mr. Rooney, yes. Vote 5-0 all in favor.

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Chairman




Ludlow Board of Selectmen

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